

Original Paper

On Application of Metonymy in Advertisements

Jing Sun¹ & Yuewu Lin^{1*}

¹ Foreign Languages College, Jiangxi Normal University, Nanchang, Jiangxi, China

* Yuewu Lin, Foreign Languages College, Jiangxi Normal University, Nanchang, Jiangxi, China

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Abstract

Metonymy, as a thinking way, on the basis of contiguity, uses one object to replace another object to activate the association for them in the same Idealized Cognitive Model (ICM). In other words, metonymy stresses on the mentally transformed process from the source domain to the target domain in the same Idealized Cognitive Model (ICM). Idealized cognitive models are those structures which help conceptualizing some certain entities, events and even abstract ideas in his mind in a specific cultural background. There are some main characteristics of idealized cognitive models. The most principal and prime point is that ICMs are idealized and cultural-based. What's more important, ICMs are embodied because of the interaction between human beings and the outside world. Last but not least, ICMs are a kind of complex gestalt structure due to the compositions of many cognitive models. Later, as the media and Internet have developed dramatically, the merchants want to use a brief way to promote their products so that there appears the advertisement. Gradually, the advertisement gets into our life and then it is a part of our life. The characteristics of advertisement are brief and clear to attract most of the consumers. It is universally known that there is an AIDA principle in advertisements. "A" means attention. "I" is interesting. "D" shows desire. "A" refers to action. In the end, not only can we draw the conclusions that the application of metonymy in advertisement can help highlight the features of advertisements so that it makes the advertisement more vivid and interesting, but also that the advertisements containing metonymy can give the customers great impressions as well as they can attach to the final destination to help the boss sell more products.

Keywords

metonymy, idealized cognitive model, advertisement

1. Introduction

“Metonymy” derives from philosophy of old Greek, which means a process including a linguistic representation and the emergence of meanings. More exactly, when Plato studied the arbitrariness of symbols, he, who was the first one, put forward the terminology—metonymy. Basing on the viewpoint of Plato, Aristotle maintained that metonymy is a subordinate category of metaphor and at the same time, he has realized that there is a close relationship between metonymy and cognition due to showing the footprint of contiguity in the brain of human beings. Metonymy is on the basis of the experience as well as cognition from human beings. That is, the categorization of experience from people, and the conclusion of phenomenon can help people understand metonymy.

Before 1990s, metonymy was always defined as a figure of speech in all kinds of researches, broadly. It did not until 1990's can people realize the significance of metonymy. In recent years, cognitive linguists gradually have attempted to distinguish between metaphor and metonymy which is the derivation. Metonymy is not a figure of speech but one kind of linguistic phenomenon, even as a basic way of thinking and behavior. Metonymy in the cognitive literature is modeled as Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs) by Lakoff (1987), who was the pioneer in the cognitive linguistics. In 2006, Wang Yin made a detailed analysis on ICMs in his book *Cognitive Linguistics*. ICM is the abbreviation of Idealized Cognitive Models. ICM refers to the abstract, unified, idealized understanding or cognition of people of specific cultural backgrounds on the basis of human beings' specific experience and knowledge on specific fields. ICM is a complete prototype structure based on humans' experience and knowledge. In 1980, he and Johnson held that metonymy is a cognitive process that uses highlighting, easily perceiving, easily memorable and recognizing to make the whole replace the part or one part to another part. Personally speaking, metonymy lays stress on the mentally transformed process from the source domain to the target domain in the ICM.

Advertisement derives from “advertere”, which means “it is a way to arouse the public's attention and to lead them to getting to some certain point”. Briefly, putting an advertisement is to let all of people know some certain object well. In 1998, *Advertising Language Course* gave a definition of advertisement: “It can be divided into two types: one is that refers to all ways to help broadcast advertisement in a generalized sense, which includes the vocal language, graphic designed language, musical language, colorful language and literal language. However, the language is not a true language in a restricted sense while a kind of a signal and a way; the other, in a restricted sense, means language in advertisement which contains the brand, the tile (the premier title, the title and the subtitle), the warning sign, slogans and the major part”. It is universally known in advertisement that there is a AIDA formula. “A” is attention. “I” means interesting. “D” shows desire. “A” refers to action. From the four letters, it is of no difficulty to realize that a successful advertisement has four steps—the most prime and principal thing is to attract the attention of the public; next, that is to arouse the customer's interest and to let them have the desire to get some certain advertisement; then, that is to keep the consumer's

desire or hope. The final purpose of the merchant is to let them buy some goods.

David Ogilvy (2007), an American master, has ever put forward a sentence, "Every word in the copy must count". Due to the essence of advertisement, it requires the advertising language is lively and vivid. It usually needs to own some characteristics that are easy to understand, very short (no more than twelve words), fashionable and satisfying the needs of the public. It is obvious for us to apply the rhetoric devices to the advertisement flexibly which can help advertisements become more intelligible and to get the dramatic effects.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concepts of Metonymy

Metonymy is reference point phenomenon. In the cognitive literature, it is defined as a cognitive process in which the vehicle provides mental access to the target within the same domain. Metonymy in the cognitive literature is modeled as Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs) (Lakoff, 1987).

Lakoff and Turner (1989) propose that conceptual mappings or relations happen to the same domain. The cognitive person uses one highlighting objective to substitute another adjacent one. Langacker (1993) reckons that metonymy is a cognitive reference point phenomenon.

Radden and Kovecses (1999) put a proposal that metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity or vehicle in the same ICM provides a mentality to another one.

Barcelona (2002, p. 246) defines metonymy in his book *Metaphor and Metonymy at the crossroads* as "a mapping of a conceptual domain, the source, onto another domain, the target. Source and target are in the same functional domain and are linked by a pragmatic function, so that the target is mentally activated". From his definition, metonymy gets a broader and pragmatic sense and it is defined against the framework of mapping. Metonymy is a mapping of a conceptual domain including two domains—the source domain and the target domain. As well as one domain can map the other domain.

Li Yongzhong (2005) points out that metonymy are not only a figure of speech, but also is a foremost way in which people can perceive and realize the objective world, which refers to the external world. The study of metonymy is far less than metaphor wherever at home or at abroad. Metonymy is a fundamental and essential cognitive way. In a way, it is more vital and more foremost than metaphor. Metonymy is a process that the source domain highlights or activates the target domain in the same ICM.

Cheng Cheng and Zhai hongyuan (2005) declare that metonymy is a symbol of spatial and temporal contiguity. From these definitions, it is no puzzle to understand that the concept of ICM is primary and principal in metonymy. The three focuses of metonymy are the cognitive process, the source domain and the target domain. Properly speaking, it lays stress on the mentally transformed process from the source domain to the target domain as well as the relationship in cognitive linguistics between the two domains. The relationships of the two domains are to highlight or activate in the same ICM.

2.2 Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs)

2.2.1 Definitions of ICMs

In 1982, Lakoff firstly proposed a term—idealized cognitive models, which was in the book *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Lakoff states that people organize their knowledge by means of structures called ICMs. Actually, idealized cognitive models are those structures which help conceptualizing some certain entities, events and even abstract ideas in our mind in a specific cultural background. Not all cultures have the absolute same explanation aiming at the same object. There are some examples. In China, Chinese always start with “Have you eaten?” and are interested in others’ salaries. While in Britain, British are fond of free talk such as talking about the weather and beginning with the greeting like “It is a nice day, isn’t?”, at the same time, they are sensitive of the topic of salaries which seldom are referred in common days. Different people not in the same culture have distinct experience and feelings pointing at the same thing, which have conceptualized in human’s mind.

The definition of ICMs is initially proposed by Lakoff, on the basis of which our Chinese scholar Wang Ying maintains that ICMs refer to the abstract generalized and idealized means of understanding some particular knowledge or experience by speakers on the basis of specific cultural background. It is a complex, integrated and prototypical cognitive model based on many CMs as well as a gestalt as a whole (Wang, 2007, p. 206).

2.2.2 Characteristics of ICMs

As to the characteristics of ICM, Lakoff raised four different types of structuring principles, and believes that each ICM is a complex structured whole, a gestalt. He states that there are four kinds of cognitive models in the conceptual system: propositional models, image-schematic models, metaphorical models and metonymic models. Propositional models and image-schematic models characterize structure; while metaphorical and metonymic models characterize mappings that make use of structural models (Lakoff, 1987, p. 154).

More exactly, propositional models explain the concepts, properties and the relationship between the concepts in detail, so it has the feature of judging. Image-schematic models are the basic models which include the foundation of the formation and explanation of concepts, categories, abstract thoughts. The metaphorical models involve two domains: the source domain and the target domain. The metaphorical mapping refers that an image-schema or a propositional model can map from the source domain to the target domain. Both the metaphorical models and the metonymic models have the two domains, but the metonymic models refer to using a concept that is easy to understand to refer to its whole or other difficult parts.

The four models determine that ICMs have the following characteristics such as idealized, gestalt, open, conceptualized, embodied and specific cultural, etc. In accordance with these basic characteristics, it is not difficult to do a summary about the main properties of ICMs.

The most principal and prime point is that ICMs are idealized and cultural-based. Lakoff held that “they are the representation of complex knowledge created by human beings, and there isn’t an ICM in the objective world” (Lakoff, 1987, p. 69). He also believed that this model is not fit the world precisely and is oversimplified. Therefore, we only define ICMs in an idealized world and use them to explain and state the human beings’ experience. What’s more important, ICMs are embodied because of the interaction between people and the outside world. Last but not least, ICMs are a kind of complex gestalt structure due to the compositions of many cognitive models.

2.3 Previous Studies of Metonymy

There are a great variety of researches on either metonymy or advertisement respectively in the early times. However, there are a few discussions both on metonymy and advertisement. Metonymy is the aspect of linguistics which linguists need to devote themselves to, but these studies both about metonymy and advertisement started a bit late.

In the West, Leech was the first scholar to study advertising from a linguistic perspective. His book *English in Advertising: a Linguistic Study of Advertising in Great Britain* was published in 1966. In this book, Leech’s descriptive research mainly focuses on the lexical and structural aspects of advertising language, but he did not explain the specific reasons deeply. Nevertheless, from a scientific point of view, the book is still recognized as a classic opening work of the combination of advertising and linguistics. Woods studies advertising language from the perspectives of phonetics, vocabulary selection and sentence selection, and finds that simple expressions, personification and presupposition are often used in advertising. Additionally, Geis wrote *The Language of Television Advertising* in 1982, which studies advertising language from a practical point of view, and combines Grice’s “cooperative principle” to propose six criteria for the use of advertising language, namely, conciseness, authenticity, clarity, relevance, persuasiveness and argument. Cook has made great contributions in the field of conversational analysis of advertising language, which proves that language can change people’s thinking and influence marketing.

A kind of new perspective searching for the inner connection between metonymy and internet video advertising is studied by Zhong Shuneng and Li Danting (2014). The thesis proposes that metonymy is a reference point phenomenon: usually, the component of the metonymy is provided as a reference to the target object (the target domain) with the mental access. Meanwhile, it makes audiences pay more attention to the object. In metonymy, the source domain is firstly highlighted by a series of modalities like vision and sound in advertising. And then it activates the target domain in the same cognitive domain. The study expresses that metonymy plays a principal and primary role in internet video advertising from a new viewpoint. In other words, studying clearly and thoroughly the metonymy is foremost and fundamental. Only studying the theory well can people apply it to internet video advertising?

Jia Hong (2010) regarded metonymy as a figure of speech and searched for the relationship between metonymy and advertisement. She found that metonymy use its feature—based on the contiguity and similarity to apply to the advertisements which can make the public produce some relevant association and give them a new way to accept the fresh subjects. She also found that metonymy can make the profound truth become more simple and easier to understand as well as turn the abstract things to more concrete, which makes people's life become more vivid and novel.

Zhang Yanjie (2015) mainly uses the relevant theory of metonymy and Idealized Cognitive Models to analyze the phenomenon of Metonymy in popular advertisements in the past five years, and found that metonymy was widely used in advertising, which can reflect a mode of thinking.

Based on the theory of Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs), Li Na (2017) tried to explore the operational mechanism of Metonymy in cosmetic advertising language and made a comparative analysis of the cognitive metonymy features of English and Chinese cosmetic advertisements, which can help people understand the common features and differences between English and Chinese thinking modes. To be specific, the similarity between the English and Chinese cosmetic advertisement is that both of them have the inclination to use the whole ICM and its part(s). There are some differences between them such as Action ICM frequently appearing in the English cosmetic advertisements while not in the Chinese cosmetic advertisements as well as in Production ICM, Product for Product in English cosmetic advertisements while Company for Product in Chinese cosmetic advertisements. Through the analysis of the metonymic thinking and the operation mechanism of metonymy, there is a clearer understanding of how English and Chinese cosmetic advertisements can achieve accessibility in human being's psychological cognition and understand the outside world.

2.4 Comments on Metonymy

From the four researches, it is no difficult to know that metonymy is not only a figure of speech, but also is a way of thinking. These researches are based on ICM in the cognitive literature. The focus of most researches is to highlight or activate the relationship between the source domain and the target domain. Moreover, it is not hard to find that the usage of metonymy is worldly wide such as reading teaching, advertising and grammar. Without metonymy, it is nearly impossible to understand this knowledge better and more adequately. Metonymy is the fracture to help us comprehend more complex contexts from a wholly new viewpoint. According to these researches, metonymy provides us a wholly new viewpoint to acknowledge the things existed for a long time or with which we are very familiar.

3. An Application of Metonymy

Radden and Kovecses (1999, pp. 30-43) propose two general conceptual configurations which includes whole ICM and its part(s); parts of an ICM. In accordance with the definition of metonymy, metonymy has an emphasis on the mentally transformed process from the source domain to the target domain in the same Idealized Cognitive Model (ICM). Both whole ICM and its part(s) can become the source

domain or the target domain. In this conceptual configuration (whole ICM and its part(s)), it contains seven types—thing-and-part ICM, scale ICM, constitution ICM, event ICM, category-and-member ICM, category-and-property ICM and reduction ICM. Whereas, in parts of an ICM, one is the source domain, another is target domain. There are ten different types of metonymy including Action ICM, Perception ICM, Causation ICM, Production ICM, Control ICM, Possession ICM, Location ICM, Sign and Reference ICM as well as Modification ICM.

3.1 Whole ICM and its Part(s)

3.1.1 Thing-and-Part ICM

Example One

Good to the last drop. (Maxwell)

It is very familiar to us, almost being well-known to every household. However, a great many people only focus on the slogan in advertisement superficially, not paying attention to the essence of the advertisement. Practically, the last drop represents Maxwell coffee. It belongs to the coffee. In other words, the coffee contains the drop. The drop is the part and Maxwell coffee is the slogan in advertisement—“Good to the last drop” shows the quality of Maxwell coffee, which are tasty, pure and thick. Using the slogan can attract the public’s attention and arouse their desire to buy.

Example Two

Our wheels are always turning. (ISUZU)

It is universally known for us that wheels are one of the components belonging to the car. That is, the wheels are the parts and the whole ICM is the car from ISUZU. The advertisement maintains that the wheels are of good quality referring to the persistence to run on the road for the ISUZU car. Only having the good enough quality of a car does attract the public to have a strong desire to buy it.

Example Three

Take TOSHIBA, Take the world. (TOSHIBA)

Most people are the users of electronic products from Japan, especially TOSHIBA products. The world does not refer to every people and things in the world, but means the global high-tech. In other words, the world-class high technology from TOSHIBA is the part and the whole ICM is the high technology. The advertisement lively emphasizes the pros and features of TOSHIBA. It represents the high-tech. If you want to know and own the technology, buy TOSHIBA! Meanwhile, the advertisement shows the confidence from the producer. Its good quality is far better than other electronic products on the basis of the same kind products.

3.1.2 The Category-and-Member ICM

Example Four

Not all cars are created equal. (MITSUBI)

On the basis of a common sense, the definition of “car” contains all kinds of brands of cars. Therefore, the car represents a category. However, the slogan of advertisement is to tell us the differences between

the car from MITSUBI and from other companies. It is the distinctions from the slogan we can realize that are to make unique and unparalleled cars for MITSUBI. The brand called MITSUBI can search ways to make distinctions and to give the customers different feelings from the MITSUBI car. Finally, the public is likely to choose the car rather than other brands of cars.

Example Five

A diamond lasts forever. (De Bierres)

Although we have no ability to buy a diamond for our sweetheart or we have never received a diamond until now, it does not matter and only should we know the slogan in advertisement. In the common sense, a diamond is a kind of category. Nevertheless, from the sentence “A diamond lasts forever”, the thing we realize is the diamond referring to the De Bierres’s diamond. A diamond is a symbol of love. Therefore, the complete meaning of “A diamond lasts forever” is that there is a persisting love until forever between spouses. The slogan of advertisement is a kind of best wishes for spouses, so it is very possible for spouses to buy it after their knowing it.

Example Six

Draft Beer, Brothers and Gold. (Draft Beer)

Draft beer is not strange with some people who are greatly fond of beer. Gold is a part of the fortune, while gold in the advertisement refers to fortune. Gold is the member of fortune, but here gold represents the category—fortune. The advertisement wants the public especially people who like to drink beer very much to know the fact that most of people enjoy the draft beer who can become friends due to the same hobby. At the same time, owning the draft beer can gain a lot of money or gold.

3.1.3 Constitution ICM

Example Seven

Tide’s in, dirt’s out. (TIDE)

In China, we always use different kinds of washing powder to hopefully deal with the dirt of clothes and tide is the common choice for us. In this advertisement, tide is the object, which is for the material constituting the object. That is to say, tide replaces the washing powder. The advertisement much accurately the main function and the final destination—clear out the dirt of the clothes. Furthermore, the rhetorical devices depict the features of TIDE, which makes the advertisement more impressive and easily being remembered. More exactly, in and out use the pair of antonyms as well as alliteration.

Example Eight

World in hand, soul in Cyber. (Microsoft Company)

The system and software of Microsoft Company can be used in the earliest time, so Microsoft Company is not unfamiliar with us. Soul is the material constituting the object and the mind is the object in this advertisement. Briefly, soul replaces the mind. The advertisement shows that the great and vase function which makes people in the completely opposite geographical position produce the strong relation by cyber. Cyber makes impossibility in the past become possibility in the present.

Moreover, it makes communication much easier and more quickly. It will help the vase universe become an intercommunicating whole. That is exactly the devotion and contribution of Microsoft Company. Therefore, on the basis of the advantages of Microsoft Company can people choose to use the system and software from Microsoft Company without hesitation?

Example Night

Foolish Glasses, Clever Choice. (Formosa Optical)

Lens make up of the glasses. In other words, the lens are the materials constituting the object, while the glasses are the object. The slogan in advertisement uses eight words which are orderly due to the half of the sentence only having four words. “Fool” and “Intelligence” is a pair of antonyms. The company using the “fool” does not want to their glasses being stupid, but to highlight the smart choose. Nobody wants to choose a pair of glasses which are of low quality. It is the high quality that makes the consumers pay more attention to them.

3.2 Parts of an ICM

While the relationship between whole ICM and its parts typically applies to practical things, the relationship between parts typically applies to entities. Part for Part metonymy tends to build on the interaction between a relation and one of the things participating in the relation. That is, Parts of ICMs may lead to metonymies in which we access a part by another part of an ICM. There are ten different types of metonymy more than whole ICM and its part(s). From these ICMs, there are action ICM, causation ICM and perception ICM which are usually used in advertisement.

3.2.1 Action ICM

Example Ten

Ask for more. (Pepsi)

This is a slogan in advertisement from Pepsi which nearly everyone knows. There is an action “ask”, but is no object in the sentence. Actually, the action “ask” obviously has a focus on Pepsi cola. More exactly, “ask” is an action and the object refers to Pepsi cola. Unless it is tasty, there are hardly people who have the wish to ask a little not to mention more cola. Due to its good to drink, there are a lot of people who are willing to buy more.

Example Eleven

We lead. Others copy. (RICOH)

In the sentence “We lead. Others copy.”, it is obvious to realize that there is an action “copy”. However, the slogan in advertisement not just represents an action “copy”, but gives publicity to the RICOH copier. The complete meaning of the sentence “We lead. Others copy.” remarks the RICOH copier has the most influential stage. It has also another meaning. That is, from its rhetoric devices, to use pun, which shows its leading stage. Due to the publicity of it, everyone ought to choose the popular and of high quality of copier.

Example Twelve

Warm the whole world. (ERDOS)

It is no doubt that wool can keep us warm in the winter. “Warm” should have been an adjective from a common person’s eye, but it is used as a verb. A verb can take an action. Therefore, the wool from ERDOS sends an action to warm everyone all over the world. The slogan in advertisement shows the warm feature of wool and has good wishes, so there are a great many of people are willing to buy the wool from ERDOS.

3.2.2 Causation ICM**Example Thirteen**

Connecting people. (NOKIA)

NOKIA is a brand which has the most popularity in the 19th century, so it is well-known to every household. The slogan in advertisement “Connecting people” is the final purpose for NOKIA. In other words, NOKIA takes the result of “connecting people”. Therefore, NOKIA is the cause and “connecting people” is the effect. It is taking the convenience for conversation between people that derives from the effect “connecting people”. Having the mobile phone from NOKIA successfully solve the problem of communication, so there are many people who want to buy the phone from NOKIA.

Example Fourteen

Live well, snack well. (Snake Welsh)

Maybe the brand of cookies is not so familiar to the public, but we can see the purpose of Snake Welsh that hopes everyone who eats the cookies from the brand can happy in the life. That is, the effect is to live well and the cause is to eat the cookies from Snake Welsh. The snack represents the biscuit from the brand of Snake Welsh. After eating them, you will “live well”. The slogan in advertisement uses the same word at the end of the two sentences. It means that it uses one of figure speeches—alliteration, which makes it rhythmic to read and remember it easily. After using metonymy and alliteration, the slogan in advertisement is more attractive.

Example Fifteen

Let people in the world taste the Chinese flavor. (Synear Dumplings)

Almost every supermarket in China can sell the Synear dumplings. Therefore, it is not difficult for us to find the popularity of Synear dumplings. The flavor is the effect after eating the dumplings, which replaces the cause of good taste. That is, after tasting the flavor of the Synear dumplings can people feel the blazing attention and devotion that make the Chinese dumplings march towards the world? Synear dumplings are the symbol of China, so Synear Dumplings have the ability to freshen the attitude of people in other nations towards China.

3.2.3 Perception ICM

Example Sixteen

Taste great. (NESTLE)

The taste is our feeling when we taste the coffee from NESTLE. More exactly, the tasty taste is perception from coffee, while the coffee from NESTLE is the thing perceived. Obviously, the slogan in advertisement uses metonymy. That is, the good taste is the source domain which creates an access to the target domain—the NESTLE coffee. When we taste a kind of drink, we usually pay more attention to its feeling from our mouth. If the coffee taste well, it is not impossible for us to buy it. Therefore, the slogan in advertisement has successfully get to the destination which is to arouse the consumer's desire and even to buy the coffee from NESTLE.

Example Seventeen

Obey your thirst. (SPIRITE)

From the professional perspective, “your thirst” is the source domain which gives an access to the target domain—the soda from SPIRITE. The thirst would cause “Your thirst”, so it is the essential reason for the need SPITE to solve the thirsty problem. Nevertheless, the kind of desire takes the rhetoric device into effect which is pun. “Your thirst” not only shows that you are so thirsty that you ought to have a drink—SPIRTE, but also represents your strong desire to buy the product produced by the company of SPIRTE. Therefore, using the slogan in advertisement can attract the public's attention to buy the soft drink from SPIRTE.

Example Eighteen

Flagrancy and Fragrance. (Stinky Tofu)

Stinky Tofu is one of the famous snacks in Changsha, Hunan Province. Somebody maintains that it smells stinky, but it tastes great. Both flagrancy and fragrance are complete opposite perceptions towards the stinky tofu. In other words, flagrancy and fragrance represent the perceptions, which replace the perceived—the stinky tofu. That flagrancy and fragrance are a pair of antonyms makes people have the strong feelings of the stinky tofu. There are two kinds of possibilities of the stinky tofu. One may be that different people have different attitudes towards the stinky tofu; another is two perceptions before and after tasting the stinky tofu. No matter how flagrant or fragrant makes people impressive on the basis of tasting the stinky tofu.

4. Conclusions

From the examples about applying metonymy to these advertisements above, it is obvious for people to understand the definition and usages of metonymy in English advertisement more deeply and easily. Not only can we know that using metonymy helps these advertisements become more vivid and interesting, but also brief advertisements containing metonymy visually transform the abstract ideas of metonymy into specific pictures or words. The application of metonymy makes people own much deeper impression for the advertisement, at the same time the advertisement containing metonymy

brings some enjoyment in vision for human beings' appreciating advertisements. In other words, it is a win-win for customers and producers. Therefore, it is necessary to apply the metonymy to the advertisements.

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